

great black wasp

Sphex pensylvanicus

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Arthropoda
Class: Insecta
Order: Hymenoptera
Family: Sphecidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

This species is a large, digger wasp. Males are 0.7–1.1 inches long while females are 1.0–1.3 inches in length. The body is black, and the wings are translucent blue-black.

BEHAVIORS

The great black wasp is active in late summer. The adult feeds on flower nectar and pollen. The female captures grasshoppers, crickets and katydids to feed the larva. She stings each one three times to paralyze it, then carries it with her as she flies back to the underground nest. She places two to six grasshoppers, crickets and/or katydids along with one egg in each nest chamber. When the egg hatches, the larva feeds on the paralyzed insects. The larval stage lasts about 10 days. The adult is a plant pollinator. Birds sometimes steal this wasp's prey as it returns to the nest.

ILLINOIS RANGE





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Aquatic Habitats

none

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; edge; gravel prairie; hill prairie; sand prairie; shrub prairie